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ABSTRACT

Decision-making and change models can take many forms. One researcher (Nordvall, 1982) has suggested five conceptual models for introducing change: a political model; a rational decision-making model; a social interaction decision model; the problem-solving method; and an adaptive/linkage model which is an amalgam of each of the other models. Another researcher (Pfnister, 1971) argued that institutions actually use three curricular planning models: a model in which changes are introduced incrementally; a model in which the mere presence of quality faculty and students will "cause" curricular change; and a systems planning model which considers the systemic impacts of change across the institution. An analysis and decision model resembling Nordvall's adaptive/linkage model and Pfnister's systems model was used to guide curricular changes for a Reserve Officer Training Corps summer program. The program review followed criticism by faculty and students that course sequencing was illogical. A committee of instructors, administrators and other "experts", examining key logistical, personnel, and cultural factors of the instructional environment, developed several potentially acceptable solutions, termed "courses of action" (C/A). Following extensive discussion, a final C/A was accepted for implementation and detailed program development followed. A curriculum/program assessment plan was also introduced involving feedback from supervisors and students. As a result of these program development efforts, resource demand was reduced and instruction was presented in a logical sequence. A flow-chart diagram of the curriculum change model is included. (JMC)

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PLANNING MAJOR CURRICULAR CHANGE

Presented at the National Conference on
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Introduction

Organizational change may be difficult to accomplish for a variety of reasons. Frederick Rudolph (1977) observed that fostering change in education is like moving a graveyard. Andrew and Jeanes (1979) noted that change never comes from inside an institution but must be forced from outside. Unwary leaders may be frustrated by an entrenched bureaucracy dedicated to status quo maintenance (Bennis, 1989). Grusky (1960) described two authority structures. A corporate structure is a highly centralized hierarchial organization and may be changed by mandate. Educational institutions tend to fall into a second category, a federated structure. Federated structures are designed with autonomous/independent subordinate structures and, by their nature, are a cushion against sudden shifts induced by management.

Negative assessments of institutional change may not be entirely accurate. While moving a graveyard is difficult for a variety of personal, political, emotional and practical reasons, graveyards <u>are</u> sometimes moved to meet emerging requirements. Nordvall (1982) observed that "the most important factor that influences the success of a change effort is the organization's receptivity to change" (p. 2). Minimizing negative impacts of change and maximizing actual and perceived positive effects of change are challenges for institutional planners and administrators.

Major curricular change is often stressful for a community college since virtually everyone is involved in or impacted by it. Additions, deletions or modifications to departmental or institutional missions, goals or curricular offerings may create internal strife, external marketing problems and negative media coverage.

Two authors, Axelrod (1968) and Levine (1978) postulated an interdependency among the subordinate structures of the institution. Axelrod proposed a curricular-instructional "system" change model. He said that changing a single element of the curriculum is unlikely to succeed. Change of one curricular element must consider a myriad of instructional-curricular linkages if curricular change is expected. Levine suggested that organizations are social-organic wholes in which change in one part of the organization may have unpredictable effects across the whole of the institution.

Robert Merten (1968) observed that organizations change slowly over time, eventually causing some existing and familiar missions to become dysfunctional. Major curricular change is often unplanned, just happening for no reason that can be clearly identified in retrospect. Without attention to larger departmental or institutional relationships, incremental change will eventually result in dysfunctional or minimally functional programs or activities. Because much change is incremental, periodic program or organizational reviews are needed to

holistically assess the need for program continuation or modification.

Political science provides two useful constructs which may be used when considering planning and implementing change in an educational context. First, Levine (1978) observed a paradox of planning. He said that planning is most needed in periods of economic decline [or other periods of organizational stress] but usually doesn't happen because it costs precious budget dollars or has politically unacceptable implications or both. However, when money is available and organizational growth is assured, no planning is conducted because all constituency needs can be met. Second, Wildavsky (1972) stated that organizations were generally not able to conduct valid self-evaluations because of the political nature of such assessments. He noted that any evaluation criticizes or implies criticism of certain programs and suggests their possible elimination or replacement with others. Any self-evaluation, therefore, becomes a political activity in a policy advocacy sense. Political activity will engender compromise and delay in decision making rather than seek to seriously measure organizational performance or program usefulness.

In the case upon which this paper is based, the policy advocacy aspects of change politics were not as influential as they might have been because of three factors: the authority of the senior manager, a general recognition of the need for a

curricular review and the ad hoc [and therefore not entrenched], nature of the committee considering curricular change.

Models for Change

Decision-making and change models usually have several elements, including problem identification, development of courses of action, selection and implementation of a course of action, and evaluation of results. Many models are very general and not used or useful.

Nordvall (1982) suggested five conceptual models for introducing change. The first, a political model, relies on bargaining and negotiating to accomplish organizational change. The political model used a conflictual paradigm of change. According to Nordvall, change induced under a political model is vulnerable because the losers can effectively inhibit winner supported change.

Rational decision making, the second model, requires that the change agent communicate factual information to interested parties and assumes that the information will be used logically to make an optimum decision. The planning model does not consider the non-rational elements of change inherent in dealing with people and is, therefore, conceptually vulnerable.

His third model, the social interaction decision model, employs diffusion of rational information to a larger constituency to achieve change. Those who might be impacted by change are expected to accept it after receiving general

information. Extra efforts are made to convince influential opinion leaders. Expectations of how this model works may be unrealistic. This model has also been criticized for use in educational contexts because it built on groups not analogous to educational institutions.

The fourth model, the problem-solving method, is described as a non-rational approach, concentrating on solving human relations problems to accomplish change. This model is criticized because it is not clear whether organizational performance is actually changed when attitudes and interpersonal relations change.

Nordvall's fifth model, an adaptive/linkage model, is an amalgam of the other systems, using what is best from each. Change tactics of the adaptive/linkage model may use elements from each of the other four: rational decision making, problem solving, social interaction and political.

Pfnister (1971) suggested that institutions actually use, in whole or in part, three curricular planning models. The first, a serendipity model of change, is one in which change is made without consideration for programmatic relationships, a "no worry" approach. Changes are introduced incrementally, perhaps spasmodically, without consideration for systemic effects. The concept of educational institutions as social-organic wholes (Levine, 1978) is disregarded.

The second curricular change model Pfnister suggested is the que sera, sera or "whatever will be, will be" model. In this

model, the institution's strategy to achieve curricular quality is to recruit the best students, the best faculty, provide the best classrooms and library and let these quality ingredients "cause" curricular change. This approach to change, like the serendipity model, is regularly made without considering systemic consequences.

Pfnister's third approach, a systems planning model, emphasizes planning and consideration of systemic impacts of change across the institution. He noted that potentially successful curricular innovation is often only partially effective because many institution's use a serendipity or que sera, sera approach to curricular change.

DuRapau and Ikeafor (1990) described an effort to change core curriculum in a private institution. The change agent had not included impacted and interested constituencies at the onset of planning. The plan changed the status quo, raising the possibilities of power shifts in the institution and termination or reduction of existing programs. By not including everyone remotely concerned, the change effort devolved into chaotic territoriality, with turf defense activities taking precedence over change. Colleges might have greater success if the curricular change process included consideration of relationships between the proposed change and the existing curriculum and curriculum delivery system.

White (1990) presented four case studies of institutional change that went awry when using the que sera sera approach. In

each case, failure to consider parts of the curricular system such as budget, institutional strategic plan, evaluative instruments, personnel requirements, hidden agendas of some of key actors in the change effort and other systemic factors doomed laudable and desirable changes.

This paper presents an analysis and decision model resembling Nordvall's adaptive/linkage model and Pfnister's systems model that can be used to guide curricular change. While the intent is to offer a model for curricular change, it may also lend itself to problem identification and solution development for other topics.

Curricular Design

Any thought of curricular design must first identify systemic and environmental limitations. Some of these limitations can be expected to be more rigidly fixed while others are more amenable to change. Berquist, Gould and Greenburg (1981) described a curricular taxonomy of six dimensions including time, space, resources, organization, procedures and outcomes. Generally, time, space and resources are more fixed than the latter three dimensions. Each decision concerning curriculum and curriculum change is typically made referring to these dimensions. The curricular situation being considered will have a strong effect on which dimension(s) is most effective.

The case upon which this paper is based was prompted by the relationship of resources to the curriculum.

Problem

This analysis and decision model was used when addressing survey responses and course evaluations provided by faculty and college students participating in a summer training period for Reserve Officer Training Corps Cadets. The program review followed criticism by faculty and students concerning the illogical sequencing of many learning activities. A study was conducted to assess these complaints and, if a problem was identified, prepare recommendations for curriculum change.

Over a period of years the sequence of block-scheduled classes presented at the ROTC Advance Camp at Fort Lewis, Washington, had evolved into one which was wasteful of resources and had poor instructional design. The sequence of class presentations had become dysfunctional in terms of best use of instructors and facilities and order of presentation of subject matter. Overall, the instructional situation resembled Figure 1 in which block of instruction "A" should be followed by "B" and then by "C", etc.

Group 1	A	B	C	D	E
Group 2	B	C	D	E	A
Group 3	C	D	E	A	B

FIGURE 1

Actually, as Figure 1 shows, except for the first instructional group this sequencing never occurred. An additional effect of this design was that any incremental or unanticipated change in the master schedule tended to exacerbate scheduling difficulties rather than resolve problems. The ripple effect of incremental change had displaced or interrupted instructional sequences in unpredicted ways.

There were a number of obstacles initially perceived as inhibiting curricular change. Obstacles included traditional holidays and the inertia of having "done it the same way before." Tradition had become a major hurdle to change. Instructional holidays such as the 4th of July and a historically based number of non-instructional days had become sacrosanct. The senior administrator had asked the committee to consider any option, including radically changed scheduling formats that produced a logical sequence of instruction events and reduced overall resource demand.

Physical plant capacity, instructional area availability and demand for faculty had become major considerations and were adversely impacting other parts of the organization. As the population of the installation increased, requirements for facilities, funding and qualified trainers/instructors exceeded availability. As can be seen in Figure 1, personnel and training facilities for a particular subject were employed sporadically, with periods in which there was much to do followed by periods during which there was little to do. Time consuming setup

requirements added to the problem of already limited facilities, aggravating the shortage. Training facilities were usually unavailable for other purposes during an entire 6-8 week training period.

The committee charged with developing a solution used an "expert panel" approach to brainstorm ideas. Schedulers, training officers, logisticians, instructors and fiscal representatives participated in developing the basic concept, identifying subsets of issues and suggesting possible solutions. This expert panel approach to program development had those agencies and persons nearest to and most familiar with the problem involved in solution development and committed to its success.

The identification or definition of a problem started the process. This yielded a revised instructional mission, identified as the "concept" in Figure 2. This concept and related assumptions caused the committee to conduct an analysis of the instructional environment in which the key logistical, personnel and cultural factors were assessed for their relevance to the problem. The committee was careful not to "assume away" the problem.

The analysis eventually produced several potentially acceptable solutions, termed "courses of action" (C/A) that appeared to satisfactorily meet the requirements. Each of the courses of action was further evaluated and then discussed with

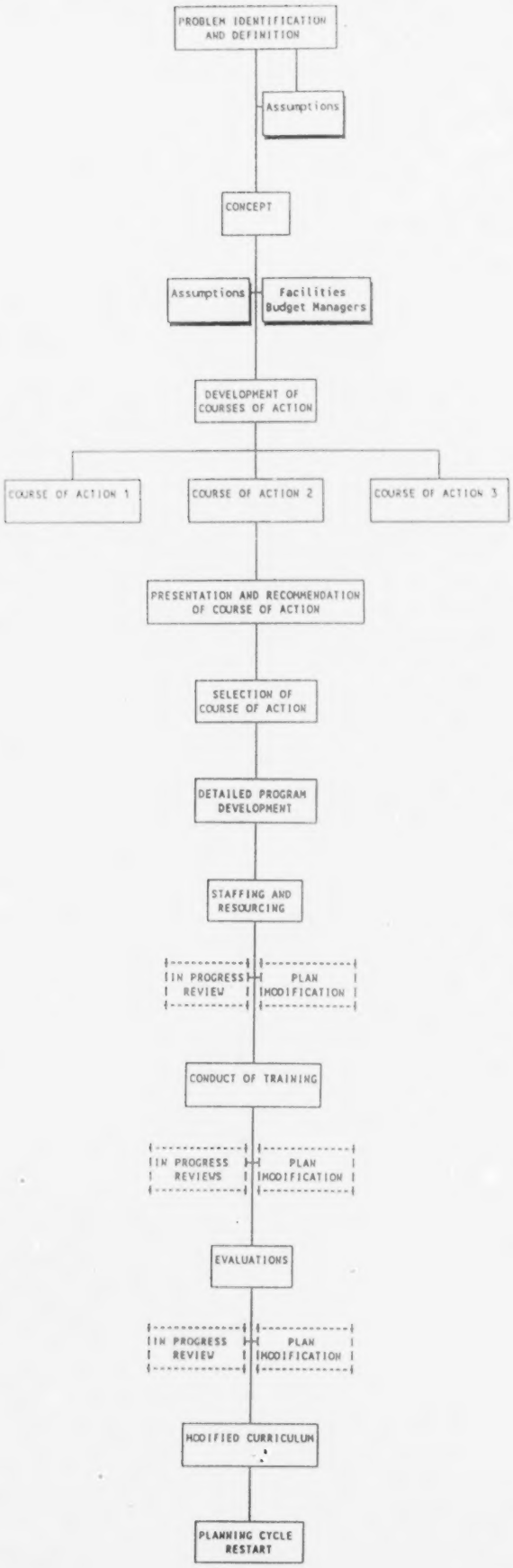

Figure 2: Curricular Planning Model

the decision maker(s). After all courses of action were discussed the committee chair recommended a particular C/A be accepted for implementation. The decision phase of the process had some local political implications which were briefly considered. However, political considerations were minimal and consensus was quickly reached. The relatively minor nature of politics in this case does not suggest that organizational advocacy politics are usually a minor consideration.

The decision was followed by detailed program development which included staffing, rehearsing, resourcing, scheduling and devising a curriculum/program assessment plan. Assessments and "in-progress reviews," the feedback mechanism in this model, frequently produced minor program modifications.

Before, during and after presentation of instruction under the new curriculum, evaluations were conducted by peers, supervisors and students. These evaluations also acted as feedback and sometimes resulted in program changes. Conceivably, as additional program changes were implemented, the whole curriculum development cycle might have started again.

Summary

The culmination of this program development effort was one in which both planning guidance elements, reduce resource demand and present instruction in a logical sequence, were met. The end product of using the model was an instructional program designed as reflected in Figure 3.

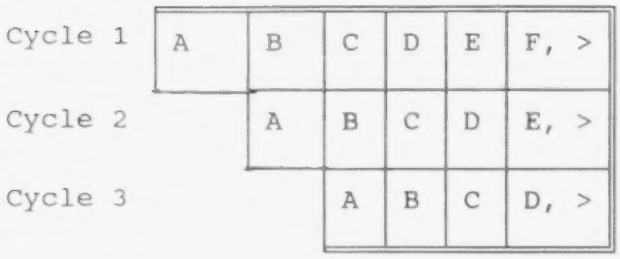

FIGURE 3

Each instructional group followed the same format and sequence, topics in a particular subject area were presented in the same sequence and in a significantly shorter period of time. Demand on training facilities, personnel resources and installation support was favorably and dramatically affected. In fact, the curricular plan was so successful it was exported to two other similar instructional activities.

While this model may be best suited for institutional programs that are block scheduled and have a high degree of structure, it can be used in many situations including development of new, complex programs. The instructional program was intended to improve selected basic student skills in a logical, effective and efficient manner. Formal and informal student evaluations were used to assess individual growth in selected areas and to evaluate basic knowledge. The institutional goals for curricular change--clear sequence, logical and integrated learning and reduced resource demand--were achieved.

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